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BETS ON THE TABLE

REF: A) KHARTOUM 1097

Classified By: MARK ASQUINO, A/CDA, KHARTOUM REASON: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Sudan People's Liberation Movement-hosted(SPLM) All Political Parties' Conference (APPC) closed on September 30. The conference concluded with all parties adopting a "Juba Declaration" that affirms commitments to all peace agreements, sets pre-conditions for elections, calls for a "truth and reconciliation commission" and for a follow-up meeting of the APPC in three months. While the SPLM is pleased with the conference's outcome, it is far from certain that its wager of putting pressure on the NCP by "allying" with the Northern opposition will pay off. End Summary.

APPC Reaches Conclusion with "Juba Declaration"

¶2. (SBU) On September 30, the SPLM-hosted All Political Parties' Conference (APPC) came to a close after five days of talks, which concluded with all parties adopting the "Juba Declaration." The SPLM again invited the National Congress Party (NCP) and other parties that had not taken part in the APPC to endorse the declaration. The declaration affirms commitments to all peace agreements, sets pre-conditions for elections, calls for a "truth and reconciliation commission" and for a follow-up meeting of the APPC in three months.

¶3. (SBU) The declaration also sets out a number of pre-conditions for holding elections. First, it requires the introduction of a referendum law in the October session of the National Assembly under terms requiring a simple majority for secession and the law's passage before December 2009. It calls for the immediate demarcation of the North-South Border; implementation of the Abyei Arbitration Decision; and resolution of the disputed population census. The declaration stipulates a need to reform a number of laws that restrict personal freedom and democratic space to conform with the Interim Constitution. Finally, it requires the resolution of the Darfur crisis so that elections can be held in Darfur as well as throughout the rest of Sudan.

¶4. (U) While much of the declaration is focused on implementation of peace agreements and democratic transformation, there are other economic and social aspects of the commitment. The declaration calls for development and infrastructure initiatives throughout the country, to include transportation projects connecting the North and South to better foster country-wide relations.

Closing Remarks

¶15. (U) In his closing address, GOSS President Salva Kiir referred to the September 28 walkout of three southern political parties (the Southern Sudan Democratic Party (SSDP), the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Union of Sudan African Parties One (USAP-1)). The parties had publicly claimed that they believed the SPLM was trying to undermine the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the first opportunity the south had at secession by building a coalition with northern opposition parties. Kiir struck back, stating that when the SPLA was fighting for independence, "the leaders of the three parties were working with the regime against us, who were fighting in the bush." He added that now was not the time for a secessionist campaign and even if it were, these parties could not "deliver it".

Tough Talk At Legislative Session

¶16. (U) As part of the APPC, GOSS Vice President Riek Machar chaired a special session of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA) at which the leaders of three prominent northern opposition parties were invited to speak. Umma Party Leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi, Hassan Al-Turabi of the Popular Congress Party (PCP) and Communist Party leader Mohammed Ibrahim Nugud all advocated a united Sudan in which there was respect for religious and cultural diversity.

¶17. (SBU) SPLM Governor of Blue Nile Malak Agar was blunt in his remarks, accusing the three northern leaders of having fomented many crises throughout Sudan's history due to their failure to respect diversity and lack of adherence to signed peace accords. Agar stated that he was a "unionist" who believed in the vision of the "new Sudan" based on equal citizenship regardless of religion, ethnicity, culture, language or gender. However, he threatened that if at the end of the interim period the referendum were not held, one could "forget about the CPA and future of Sudan, and this assembly will take up arms." Other GOSS representatives averred that the remainder of the interim period might be too short for making unity attractive; instead it was time to start making post-referendum arrangements.

Comment

¶18. (C) The SPLM has wagered that an alliance, or at least the appearance of one, with the Northern opposition will pressure the NCP into showing more flexibility in meeting the remaining CPA benchmarks, particularly on the referendum law. Meanwhile, the northern parties have seized on this quasi-alliance with the SPLM in order to exact democratic concessions that would facilitate their election campaigns.

¶19. (C) It is far from clear what will follow if these bets fail, and/or these marriages-of-convenience dissolve. The Juba declaration carefully avoids stating that the parties will boycott the elections. Instead it says that these are the pre-conditions for fair, transparent elections.

¶110. (C) No one expects these conditions to be met, and our interlocutors acknowledge that they wanted to "see how far they could get" and would reassess within three months.

ASQUINO